

Everybody's Looking For Something by callunavulgari

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Summary:

On the third weekend of May during their last year at Hawkins High, Steve Harrington throws a party.

Billy crashes it.

Everybody's Looking For Something

Author's Note:

When all you want to do is write about Will Byers and Eleven being stepsiblings and instead you write about emotionally constipated assholes.

On the third weekend of May during their last year at Hawkins High, Steve Harrington throws a party.

The flyer advertising the event is crisp, bright pink, and tells them in pretty, cursive letters to kindly bring their own fucking booze. Billy suspects the Wheeler girl's involvement.

Billy spends the day worrying at it inside his pocket, taking it out to occasionally spin across his desk during class. He folds it into tiny shapes, each more detailed, more intricate than the one that came before, and tosses it upwards only to snatch it out of the air again. Pause. Refold. Toss again. During lunch, he holds it between two fingers and flicks his lighter beneath it, over and over again, until the spark finally catches and a flame blooms to life, the paper ever so slowly starting to blacken and curl. It begins to smoke.

Billy watches as the flame catches and spreads, as the fire eats away at Steve's address, blazing up the sheet so quickly that he feels a lick of heat against the pads of his fingers before he pulls away. He leaves it burning there, shoving up and away from the table, and catches Steve's eyes from across the cafeteria. They aren't friends. They don't talk. Billy has no reason to even *have* an invitation, save for the simple fact that if *King Steve* was going to have to have one of his famous parties after a year and a half of slumming it with the nerds, Billy would be expected to crash it.

Billy sneers at Steve, watches as Steve coolly raises an eyebrow in return. Unphased. He blinks and turns away from Billy, ducking his head towards Wheeler when she leans over to press her mouth against his ear, her lips shaping out words that Billy can't quite make out. The lunch room is loud today, and Byers is sitting on her other side, unconcerned. It isn't a big fucking deal, but Billy feels a hot

surge of anger anyway.

Tommy catches up with him outside of his locker, flashing Billy a shit-eating grin. He's got another fucking flyer in his hands. He gestures with it, asks, "So, you gonna crash it?"

Billy closes his eyes for a moment and thinks about pressing his aching forehead to the locker. Thinks about turning around and laying Tommy out. Instead, he smiles, slow and dirty, and takes the new flyer. Says, just as Steve is emerging from the lunchroom with his entourage, "Course I am.

The thing is, Billy Hargrove has already seen the inside of Steve Harrington's house. He knows the address, the faintly chipped numbers on the mailbox, and the winding roads that will take him there. He's seen the wide empty hallways and the big pool in the backyard. He's seen the dining room, knows where the key is to Steve's dad's scotch cabinet. Knows that Steve's dad won't miss the good stuff because he only keeps it for parties. Knows that every room in that big, quiet house is fucking empty except for Steve's.

And Billy - Billy knows what Steve's bedroom looks like and how Steve looks spread out across his sheets. Knows the way that his mouth catches around a smile and how he sounds when he's sleepy and hungover in the mornings, how he'll harass Billy until he goes to get them breakfast, whether it be from the pantry or the diner in town.

Billy knows a lot about Steve's house. He knows a lot about *Steve*.

The December after Billy moved to Hawkins, he'd spent a lot of time roaming the quiet, icy little town. He had spent long hours trekking through the big spooky woods, quaking from the cold in his too-thin jacket, scuffing his boots through dead leaves and slushy grey snow. He'd gone to all the diners, all the little shops, fucked the pretty little small-town girls in the back of his camaro and never once called them back. And then, when that wasn't enough, he parked his car on the road leading up to the highest point of the quarry and tossed rocks over the edge, wondering how long it would take someone to

find him if he slipped and fell.

It wasn't a very good Christmas.

And then, one cold night, Steve had found him there. He'd taken a seat beside Billy, as if it wasn't a fucking dumb idea to sit with your feet dangling over a good six story drop. As if it wasn't fucking stupid to be out here at all when the temperature was well below freezing.

They sat in silence for awhile, shivering and blowing on their hands, the quiet winter night a heavy shroud around them. Then Steve had nudged their shoulders together and said in a playful sort of voice, "You aren't thinking about jumping, are you?"

Billy swallowed and looked at him. The tilt of the smile on Steve's face was joking, but his eyes were anything but.

Billy wrinkled his nose and curled his lip into his best approximation of a sneer. He'd said something cutting, played it off as ridiculous, but the truth was, looking out over the edge to the frigid black water so far below, he didn't know.

He wasn't *not* thinking about it. He couldn't lie and say that he hadn't been skirting the edge of this cliff these last few weeks, thinking - wondering - if anyone would notice he was gone.

Steve had known it, too. It was in his dumb brown eyes and the way his smile had gone a little sad around the edges, that shitty faked sympathy that the people in this stupid town liked to toss around to make *themselves* feel better. As if their sad little faces could make anyone's problems go away. Billy's shoulders drew back, bristling all over, like sharp spines prickling up and down his back. He'd shaken off the quiet moment, pushed himself roughly to his feet and said, "What's it to you, anyway?"

He'd slipped.

His shitty California shoes skidded across a patch of ice, and his heart had dropped right through his ribcage as he pitched forward-

Steve caught him around the legs, shoved with his whole body so that Billy would fall backwards instead of forwards, and Billy had

gone sprawling back to the ground. Stared at Steve with wide eyes, and swallowed.

Billy licked his lips and drew his knees up to his chin, shivering. Said, in a voice that was as steady as he could make it, "I could really go for a burger right now."

Steve chuckled nervously, shoving a shaking hand through his hair, and said, "Yeah, yeah. I know a place."

Then he'd pulled Billy to his feet.

It worked. Sort of. For the rest of break, whenever Billy felt that itch - that scratching *need* to be somewhere else, to do something *dangerous*, he'd gotten into his car and driven to Steve's.

Steve with the empty house and the wide, Bambi eyes. Steve and the way that he laughed when he was drunk, how he covered his mouth with his hand, knuckles curled against his lips. How he'd tip backwards on the couch and look at Billy, always *looking*.

There had been moments that winter, where something hot and electric was in the air between them. Charged moments, quiet moments, where Steve stood too close or smiled too soft, and Billy *wanted*.

The moments passed. Break ended. And things stopped working. Back to the status quo where Tommy and Carol dogged Billy's heels, and Steve went back to Wheeler and Byers.

It was only a week or two. Just a lonely, quiet Christmas that he'd spent getting drunk and stupid with another lonely kid. But they were the best two weeks Billy had had since he came to this godforsaken backwater town. And he'd fucked it all up. For what? For *this*? For drinking and partying and being top dog at a shitty high school that wouldn't remember Billy's damn name five years down the road? Fuck that.

The truth was simple. Billy missed Steve Harrington.

So he gets drunk and crashes his fucking party.

The house is packed, music blaring, people spilling out of the doors and onto the front porch. Billy can hear shrieking from the backyard, a splash as someone jumps into the pool. Billy pushes through them all and makes a beeline for the key to the scotch cabinet, turning the key carefully when he's sure that no one is looking, and grabs something at random. He carefully replaces the key and pulls the bottle to his lips, wincing at the nice, smooth burn as it goes down. Damn. He'd been hoping for something cheap enough to bring tears to his eyes.

Billy squints into the crowd, unsurprised to see kids from school that he recognizes, preppy little fuckers who call out to him as he passes, but no one that he actually wants. He covers the entire first floor before he thinks to go outside, wading through a crowd that reluctantly parts before him.

He finds Steve with Wheeler and Byers near the pool, Wheeler making a face at something that one of them has said. She's sprawled out on a pool chaise, her feet propped up on Byers' lap. All three of them have beers, but none of them seem to be drinking them.

As Billy watches, Wheeler says something to Steve, setting her hand on his knee and smiling, patting it as if she has any right to touch him. The anger strikes again, searing deep, and Billy sneers, snatching a cigarette from someone as he passes and sticking it in his mouth. He takes a deep drag and lets it out through his nose, feeling anger ebb into something a little more manageable.

"Harrington!" he's calling before he has a chance to think better of it. Steve's head whips towards his, his eyebrows creeping up towards his hairline as Billy stalks towards them. He eyes Billy, gaze dropping to the bottle of expensive-ass whiskey in his hands. His expression tightens.

"Hargrove," he says darkly, lip curling into a sneer. "What can I do for you?"

"Already got me what I needed." Billy takes a long, slow drink of the whiskey, and watches Steve's eyes track the bob of his throat. He

pulls back, smacks his lips, and grins wide-- shows his teeth. Winks. "Tell your daddy I said thanks."

Steve's eyes are dark. They make him hungry.

"I'll make sure to do that the next time I see him," he says primly, and turns away, going back to Wheeler and Byers like Billy is nothing. Like he isn't a threat or-- or *anything*. The anger bites at Billy, a white-hot wave that crashes over him, drowning him.

He tries to smother it down, tries to remember that he's not actually here to get in a fight, that all he wants to do is yank Steve's pigtails a little, make him squirm. Maybe get an eyeful of the pretty way he flushes when he's angry.

"I see that you're still playing third wheel to the princess and the freak," Billy says, and watches as the back of Steve's neck goes dark red. Beside him, Wheeler's brows draw together in a truly glorious glare. Her lips purse and she's starting to get to her feet when Steve gently pulls her back down.

He's still not looking at Billy when he says, "C'mon, he's not worth it, Nance."

Billy laughs.

"Need your girl to do your fighting for you, huh, Harrington?" He pauses, considering, and makes a thoughtful noise, clenching his stolen cigarette between his teeth. He wags the whiskey apologetically in their direction and says, "Sorry, Byers. I meant ex-girl."

Wheeler levels Billy with another impressive scowl and now even Byers is watching him, a calculating look in his dark eyes. Billy draws closer, until he's only a few feet from where they sit. He knows other people are watching now, that they've had an audience since Billy shouted Steve's name. Probably even before that, maybe as early as Billy walking through the front door. He smiles, mean.

"See, I just can't figure out your game here, Stevie-boy. I mean, are you waiting for the chance to steal her back?" Billy goads, dropping

down onto the chaise next to Steve. He drops the whiskey onto the ground next to them in favor of getting an arm around Steve's shoulders, dragging him in close, and whispering, in a conspiratory manner, "Or are you just fucking them both?"

Steve explodes into motion, jumping to his feet so quickly that Billy feels dizzy. Steve's teeth are bared, the color high in his cheeks. He feels a thrum of pleasure, of *anticipation* go through him, and settles himself carefully onto Steve's vacated seat. He sprawls, thighs spread wide onto either side of the chair, and picks the bottle back up. Takes a swig.

He turns to Wheeler and winks at her. Asks, "How do two dicks feel, anyway? Do you let them fuck you at the same time? Or do you just watch them fuck each other?"

Wheeler stares at him, eyebrow raised, impressively unflappable. Beside her, her freak boyfriend is still watching them with those beady black eyes of his. Like he knows all of Billy's secrets.

"Wouldn't you like to know," Wheeler says sweetly. She's set her beer to the side of her chair, and leans in towards him, her hands folded together in her lap. Her eyes glint hard, and she smiles. "But I guess you've never even managed to get one, have you?."

Billy's eyes widen, and he can feel himself tipping over the edge. The anger is slower to come this time, a smoldering burn that flares bright and hot in his gut. It feels like looking at his dad and smiling with a bloody mouth. Feels like getting hit in the stomach, grabbed by the hair. Feels like, 'Yes, sir.'

Billy wants to hit her where it hurts, wants to see that unflappable attitude of hers tip into true rage, see if the princess is all bark and no bite or if she can throw down with the best of them.

He makes his lips stretch wide, and nods, commiserating. "True, true. I have - *tragically* - never once had a taste of dick. Had my share of pussy though." He leans in towards her, and whispers, "Have you ever tasted pussy, Princess? You had that friend, didn't you? What was her name, again?"

Wheeler's expression twists, rage sparking, catching, setting her ablaze, but before Billy can properly enjoy it, Steve is yelling and tackling Billy sideways into the pool.

The water is colder than he thought it would be, and Billy gasps when he hits the water, Steve's weight sending them both under fast. Billy grunts when he hits the bottom of the pool, and the back of his head strikes *hard*, making him dizzy and slow. Steve's weight pulls off of him, goes somewhere, and Billy reaches out after him, frantic and jerking in the water.

It can't be more than a minute that he's down there, reeling, unable to figure out which way is up, his arms feebly pawing at the water. He feels pathetic, and smothered, and awful all at once. Feels awful about everything. For taking this shit too fucking far. For *always* taking it too fucking far.

And then arms are around him, hauling him easily back to the surface.

When Billy's head breaks the water, the first thing he sees is Steve, panting and wild-eyed, his face dripping wet. His lips are red and just as pretty as Billy remembered. They're moving, saying something to someone as he awkwardly paddles them to the side of the pool.

The second thing that Billy sees is Byers, up close and personal when Steve passes Billy over to him. He hauls Billy out, still quiet as he lays him out on the concrete before reaching back over to help pull Steve out of the pool.

"That was stupid," Wheeler is saying somewhere, but there's a tinge of concern in her voice. She leans in to look at him, and Billy tries to sneer, but he still feels-- discombobulated. Her fingers prod the back of his skull and she hisses once, says, "He's bleeding."

She snaps her fingers in his face, unphased when he grimaces and tries to bat her hand away.

"Look at me, asshole," she says, and Billy reluctantly - *slowly* - turns to look at her. "How many fingers am I holding up?"

Billy blinks, tries to focus, and can't. Not really. Her fingers keep wavering in and out, like they're a mirage. He bats at them again, and slurs, "Too fucking many."

She sighs.

"Steve," she says, real quiet. "He should probably go to a hospital."

Panic surges in Billy's gut, makes him feel like he's going to be sick. He turns on his side and vomits up pool water.

"Okay, that's it," Wheeler shouts. "Party's over, everyone out!"

Billy thinks that there are groans of disappointment, and then Wheeler is getting to her feet and marching off somewhere, taking Byers with her. Steve takes her spot, kneeling down next to Billy. He's still dripping, water beading on the tip of his nose. He looks a weird mixture of concerned and irritated.

Billy grabs for him, and thinks that he manages to get his hand.

"No hospitals," he says, swallowing down the taste of bile and pool water.

Steve looks at him like he's an idiot. "Dude, you're bleeding."

"*No hospitals*," Billy insists, squeezing Steve's hand hard.

Steve hisses and yanks his hand back. "Yeah, yeah. No hospitals. I've got it."

"No hospitals," Billy murmurs again, head lolling backwards. He hisses as a particularly sensitive area comes in contact with the concrete and flinches away. A moment later something soft is tucked under his head.

He thinks that Wheeler comes back with Byers sometime later, and has a vague, hazy memory of watching her argue with Steve, gesturing down at Billy every once in awhile before she'd thrown up her hands and gone stalking off.

"She's going to get you some ice," Steve explains, and Billy frowns.

“Don’t care what she does,” he mutters. He tries to tip his head up and off the ground, looking around carefully. There are solo cups and shit everywhere, but no people. “Where’d everyone go?”

Steve snorts. “Nancy chased them off. Turns out nobody actually wants to be around when an ambulance shows up.”

Billy groans. “I said, *no hospitals*.”

“Yeah, I know. We got it. We’re going to get you some ice, and then I’m going to make sure you don’t fall the fuck asleep.”

Billy rolls that around in his head for awhile, licking the taste of blood from the back of his teeth.

“I’m sorry,” he says eventually.

Steve crosses his legs under him and turns to look at Billy. “You were an asshole.”

“I’m always an asshole.”

“You were an *exceptionally* enormous asshole,” Steve says, his eyes hard.

“Yeah,” Billy says. “I was. Sorry.”

“Not me you have to apologize to,” Steve tells him, tipping his head towards the house, where Wheeler is presumably still getting him ice. Maybe she’d gotten distracted by Byers. Maybe she’ll never come back.

Billy wrinkles his nose up. “I mean, I owe you a little one. For stealing your booze, at least.”

Steve pauses, then says in a quiet voice. “You know that my dad won’t miss it. I don’t care about the damn booze.”

“Fine,” Billy says. “For crashing your party, then.”

Steve’s lips quirk. “Pretty sure you got an invitation.”

“Then,” Billy says, casting his mind frantically around. There’s so much that he has to apologize before, but he can’t fucking think right now. “For beating your face in.”

“Already apologized for that once,” Steve tells him with a smile, and that’s great. The bastard is enjoying this now.

But he’s right, Billy thinks. He had apologized for that back over Christmas. They’d been drinking and Billy had touched Steve’s face and said that he was glad that he didn’t break something so pretty. Steve had laughed. It was the first time that Billy had thought about kissing him.

“For not kissing you when I should have, then,” Billy says without thinking, and Steve goes quiet, watching him.

He licks his lips and asks, in a small, unsteady voice, “When you should have?”

“Over Christmas,” Billy tells him, wondering if he should attempt to sit up for this conversation. Things are steadying out now, reality coming back into focus, but his head still throbs like a motherfucker. He wonders where Wheeler is with that ice.

“I wanted to,” he explains, his lips feeling too thick. Almost numb. “Lots of times. But I didn’t. And then we stopped talking.”

Steve is still just looking at him.

Billy attempts a smile, his lips quirking up humorlessly. “I’m sorry for that, too.”

Steve’s expression is doing something complicated, and he reaches out, touches two fingers to the side of Billy’s head, where it doesn’t hurt. He opens his mouth, shuts it again, and Billy thinks that he’s about to say something when there’s the sound of footsteps behind him.

Wheeler drops into sight, saying, “I couldn’t find your ice, but I got this.”

She hands Steve a bag of frozen peas.

"Thanks, Wheeler," Billy drawls. "You're a sweetpea."

Wheeler turns to glower down at him, and Steve nudges Billy in the ribs with the edge of his shoe, just slightly. Billy clears his throat.

"I mean it," he says. "Thanks for this. I'm sorry I was an asshole."

Wheeler eyes him suspiciously for a moment longer, then huffs. "It's not like it wasn't expected. You're always an asshole."

"Even so."

Wheeler sniffs. "Apology accepted, I guess."

"Make sure you watch him," Byers says from somewhere nearby. His expression is still flat, but there's a spark of something when he speaks that makes Billy think that maybe he's not as much of a stick in the mud as he'd thought. "Keep an eye on him tonight. Wake him up every hour or so."

He turns to look at Billy, and his lips tip upwards. "If his symptoms get worse, I don't care how much he bitches, call a damn ambulance."

"You sure you don't want us to stay?" Wheeler asks, wringing her hands a little as she stands and dusts off her skirt.

Steve smiles at her, and for once, it doesn't make Billy feel like killing someone. "Naw, I'll be fine, Nance. This is hardly the worst thing I've done this year."

She shoots Billy an unsure look at that, like she can't think of anything worse than making sure Billy doesn't die in his sleep. "If you say so."

He gives her a look, heavy and full of judgement. She colors.

"Yeah, fine. So we've dealt with worse." She stoops to drop a quick kiss to the top of Steve's head, and before Billy can start to get out of sorts about it, Byers is stepping forward to clap an awkward hand to Steve's shoulder.

“See you later, man,” he says, and follows Wheeler around the side of the house, leaving Billy and Steve in the quiet, the gurgle of the pool and the heavy, oppressive sound of trees rustling their only company.

“Don’t know how you can stand living so close to these woods,” Billy grouses, eying the treeline suspiciously when something heavy rustles through the leaves. “They creep me the hell out.”

Steve chokes on a loud, braying laugh. “Yeah, about that... Think that you can walk yet? I’m not too fond of them myself.”

Billy eyes the long trek to the back door, all of fifteen steps. Maybe twenty. It feels like a mile.

“Probably,” he says. Then admits, “I might need help.”

Steve extends a hand.

They sit side by side on the couch, Billy slumped onto some throw pillows on one side, Steve playing with a pillow in his lap on the other. The television isn’t on, but the radio is, still playing whatever had been on at the party, just quieter.

Billy can hear Steve breathing. He can hear his own heartbeat, that’s how fucking quiet it is.

“Well, this isn’t horribly awkward or anything,” Steve mutters, scrubbing a hand through his hair. It’s drying in absurd, gravity-defying tufts. Billy’s been tracking its progress.

The first thing Steve had done when they’d gotten inside was grab them dry clothes; Billy had wobbled horribly stepping into the sweats by himself in the bathroom, but he wasn’t about to strip down in the middle of Steve’s living room. He’s tying not to think about wearing Steve’s pants, and failing miserably. At least he isn’t soaking wet anymore.

Billy shrugs, and tips his head back against the cushions. “Don’t suppose I can convince you to go grab me that bottle of whiskey?”

He can feel Steve's glare burn into him without even bothering to look, and smirks. "Relax, Princess. I'm just kidding."

Steve scoffs. "You better be. Just..." he trails off, making Billy crack an eye open to look at him. He's got his hands folded across the pillow in his lap, eyes cast downwards. He looks lost. When he sees Billy looking, he flushes and tosses the pillow at him. "Just go to sleep, Billy."

"You'll be here?" Billy asks, and winces at the neediness in his own voice.

Steve swallows and flashes him a quick smile. "I'll be here."

The next few hours are a haze, Billy hovering somewhere between asleep and awake. He sees Steve, the silhouette of him leaning over Billy in the dark, shaking his shoulder, murmuring questions that Billy thinks he answers. Steve's living room is warm, his couch comfortable, and it smells how it did back in December, when Billy would spend long hours stretched across it, drunk or high or both.

Steve is a warm, comforting presence on the other side of the couch, a shape in the dark that makes something inside of Billy go quiet.

He doesn't have a nightmare. Neither does Steve.

In the morning, Billy squints over at Steve, asleep on the other end of the couch. His head is pillowed on his arms, his entire body curled into the smallest space possible. Billy's toes are tucked under his thighs. The soft glow of morning light seeps in through the curtains, casting half of Steve's face in the soft, pre-dawn light of early morning. The other half is shadowed, his eyelashes dark smudges against his cheeks.

He looks like something that Billy wants to keep. Like something he doesn't deserve.

As Billy watches, Steve squirms and stretches slow, his body unfurling, slowly at first and then all at once. He blinks his eyes open, and glances around the room as if he's not sure where he is. When they light on Billy, Steve blinks once, surprised.

“Hey,” Billy whispers, and nudges him with his toes.

“Hey,” Steve says muzzily, rubbing at his eyes.

“Sorry,” Billy tells him, and Steve looks at him, confused.

“For what?”

Billy shrugs. “A lot of shit. Last night. Last week. Last month. You know. Shit.”

Steve swallows and stretches harder, wincing as something in his neck pops.

“You were an asshole,” he says around a yawn. “It’s fine.”

Billy smiles a little. It’s not funny.

“I’m always an asshole,” he says, and when Steve looks at him, Billy thinks about kissing him. Thinks about being worthy of kissing him. He licks his lips. “I’m going to work on it, though.”

“Yeah?” Steve asks, cocking his head. There’s a moment, charged between them. Something that feels a lot like electricity. He thinks that Steve might be thinking about kissing him too.

“Yeah,” Billy says, and watches Steve smile slow and sweet. He’d missed that smile. “I don’t think I want to be sorry for anything anymore.”

He pushes himself up and slowly, carefully, crawls across the couch, until he’s practically in Steve’s lap, looming over him, their lips close, but not touching. Billy reaches out and touches Steve’s cheek, watches his eyes close.

He can feel Steve’s breath against his open mouth.

“Okay?” he breathes. Steve’s lips part. His eyelashes flutter.

Billy watches him swallow.

“Yeah,” Steve says. “Okay.”

Billy presses his lips to Steve, eases them back onto the couch and kisses him, slow and syrupy-sweet. When he pulls back, Steve's eyes are half open, wide and dark and impossibly warm. He licks his lips, and says, in a sleepy, quiet voice, "Breakfast?"

Billy buries his face in Steve's chest and pretends that it's December.

Author's Note:

For those interested, my [main blog](#) and my [writing blog](#). :)